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LITERARY CONVENTION
AT NEW YORK

REPORT ON
THE PROPRIETY OF
STUDYING THE BIBLE
IN INSTITUTIONS

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R E P O R T
OF THE COMMITTEE
ON THE
PROPRIETY OF STUDYING THE BIBLE
IN THE
INSTITUTIONS OF A CHRISTIAN COUNTRY,
PRESENTED TO THE
LITERARY CONVENTION AT NEW YORK,
OCTOBER, 1831.

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1832.

*Extracts from the Proceedings of the Literary Convention at
New York, Oct. 1831.*

STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

‘A report was subsequently read by W. C. Woodbridge, on behalf of the Committee, on the propriety of studying the Bible as a classic, in the institutions of a Christian country, which was assigned for discussion for the last year. The claims of the Bible as a literary work, to the attention usually paid to a classic, were to be superior to any other work of antiquity, on the grounds usually referred to in deciding such a question, whether we consider its subject — its genuineness and authenticity — the reputation of the work and its authors — its universal and permanent character — its influence on the intellect, the taste, and the moral character — its application to our circumstances as a free people — or its practical value in life. The report was referred to a Committee, consisting of Dr Fisk, Dr Macclay, and Prof. Vethake. They recommended the following resolutions, which were adopted by the Convention.

‘*Resolved*, That in the opinion of the Convention, the Bible has the strongest claims, founded on its literary merits, to be received as a classic; and that the study of its contents ought to form a part of common education.

‘*Resolved*, That the literature and antiquities of the Bible ought to form a part of every course of liberal education.

‘*Resolved*, That a Committee be appointed to prepare and report a plan, for a course of biblical instruction, especially in reference to the academical and collegiate course.

‘*Resolved*, That in the opinion of the Convention, the Report on The propriety of studying the Bible as a classic in the institutions of a Christian country, is a document which deserves the attention of the public, as well on account of its copious information, as for the candor with which it states and examines objections to the proposed plan of biblical instruction.

‘Dr Milnor, Dr Maclay, Professor Vethake, W. C. Woodbridge, and Professor Woolsey, were appointed a committee under the third resolution.’

The Committee will be grateful for information concerning any peculiar method which may have been adopted in the pursuit of this study, addressed to either of its members.

STUDY OF THE BIBLE.

At the Literary Convention held in New York in October, 1830, the question was proposed as a subject of discussion for the next year, whether 'the Bible should be studied as a classic in the institutions of a Christian community.' It was understood to refer to the claims of the Scripture to a place in our course of education as a part of our literature, and to exclude all reference to theological instruction or to the methods in which it should be studied. — A committee was appointed to examine and report upon it, at the next convention, consisting of W. C. Woodbridge, Rev. T. H. Gallaudet and Professor Robinson of Andover. — The state of Professor Robinson's health preventing his attention to the subject, the following report was presented by the remaining members of the Committee, to the Convention of 1831, and unanimously approved; and a second Committee appointed to report to the next Convention, on the best method of pursuing this study.

REPORT.

STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

THE study of the Greek and Roman classics is pronounced by the prescription of centuries to be the only road to sound learning, and thorough intellectual cultivation. That the investigation of foreign languages is admirably adapted to form a course of practical logic, to train the mind to philological and moral reasoning, and to furnish it with a rich store of thought and expression, your Committee are fully satisfied. They know not that any languages better deserve to be studied for these purposes, than the Greek and Latin; whose perfect and philosophical construction, antiquity has made unchangeable. They are also indispensable to every man who designs to attain eminence in any of the learned professions; and are the only medium of access to the treasures of sacred literature. They conceive, however, whatever may be the decision on the comparative value of these studies, the question before the Convention does not involve, in the remotest degree, the abandonment of the classics of Greece and Rome. The only inquiry is, whether *more* is not necessary — whether the *sacred classics* ought not to be added to the *profane*, in order to complete the circle of knowledge which is designed to mak

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men who shall be the pillars of the state, the ornaments of society and the benefactors of mankind.

They see that Homer, and Virgil, Cicero, and Demosthenes, and Sallust, and Xenophon, are placed in the rank of classical authors; that similar authority and honor are conceded in our public institutions to Locke, and Paley, and Priestly, and Stewart, and Brown, and Tytler, so far as even to make them subjects of study; and that Pope and Milton, Johnson and Addison, Hume and Gibbon, are spoken of under the same title.

The topic before us involves the question, whether the works of Moses and Daniel, of David and Isaiah and Solomon, of Matthew, and Luke, and Paul, shall rank with those which bear the celebrated names we have mentioned — whether the Bible, which includes these, and a variety of works of similar character, whose authority is more generally revered and appealed to, among enlightened nations, than that of any other book in existence, and which is regarded as the standard of truth and duty, by the majority in every Christian country, has *equal claims* to the time and efforts of those who wish to acquire a truly liberal, and universal education. It was designed by those who moved the consideration of this subject to refer to such a course of study, as shall *make our youth thoroughly acquainted with the contents of the Bible*; and also to present the inquiry, how far the original languages and literature of this sacred volume should form a subject of instruction in our higher institutions.

Nor does the topic before the Convention, in the view of those who proposed it, or of the Committee, relate to *religious instruction* or to the inculcation and application of *any system of religion*. — Many of our schools and literary institutions already have a course of religious instruction; others have none; and only one is known to the Committee, in which a complete course of biblical instruction is pursued, comprising the study of the *contents* and the *literature of the Bible*. The question is, whether, aside from the doctrines it teaches, the Bible has any claims to be received as a subject of study in institutions of both characters, as a part of the literature of the ancient and the modern world, as an appropriate branch of instruction for youth, on account of its intellectual and moral influence.

The ground on which any work is received as a classic, worthy of having its contents examined and its literature investigated, may be comprised in the following:

- I. The importance of the subject.
- II. The antiquity and authenticity of the work itself.
- III. Its permanent and universal character in distinction from what is of a temporary, local, or party character.
- IV. The reputation of its author, and the extent to which it is received and referred to.
- V. Its usefulness in the development of the intellectual powers.
- VI. Its elevated rhetorical character, and its favorable influence on the taste and style.
- VII. Its happy moral and social influence.
- VIII. Its application to the peculiar circumstances of our age and country.

IX. Its practical value in after life.

Some works are adopted as classics, which have only one or two of these characteristics. An ordinary work, possessed of *all of them*, would be considered *indispensable* to a liberal education. Such a work the Bible has been pronounced to be, by some of the wisest and most learned men, of the most enlightened countries and periods; and such we believe it must be regarded by every one who will examine it by these tests.

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE BIBLE.

I. *The subjects of the Bible* are highly important. It contains the only history of the formation of the earth, and of the origin of man, which bears even a *resemblance* to truth, in the opinion of enlightened nations; or which corresponds in any degree, with those permanent records of the creation which geology has discovered. It is *the only original record* of the early history of mankind, of the history of the Jewish nation, and of the foundation of Christianity; and in this character, its authority is at least as fully and as generally admitted as that of Tacitus, and Xenophon, and Hume. It contains the only system of religion, the only code of morals which most of the enlightened men of civilized countries have regarded as pure and perfect; the system which prevails in our own country, and in all civilized nations. Were the Koran, or the Shaster, the *only book* professing to treat on these subjects, which thus received the general sanction of enlightened men, would it not deserve as much attention as a received work on science, or a generally acknowledged standard of eloquence?*

II. In regard to the *genuineness* and *authenticity* of the work, as a production of former ages, and a record or an exhibition of their character, the Bible is sustained by evidence superior to that of any other work of antiquity, aside from any question of its inspiration. Its reception by a whole nation — the care with which its purity has been preserved, and the multiplication of its copies — its correspondence with other authentic works and general history, and the records of Creation which the earth itself contains — all furnish better evidence of its *authenticity*, than belongs to any other classic of ancient or modern times.

III. The Bible is not less remarkable for its *permanent and universal character*, in distinction from what is of a temporary, local, or party character.

It is the book of all ages and of all nations, adapted to every state of society, to every form of government, to every period of the

* On this subject Professor Stuart remarks with great force, in a document to which he refers the Committee. 'If antiquity be an object of research for a man of liberal education, where is the book as ancient or as authentic as the Bible? If the history of countries which were the *incunabula gentis humanæ*, (the cradles of the human race) is a proper and important subject of inquiry, where is this to be found, except in the Bible? The incongruous, — not to say contemptible, fables of heathen authors, in regard to this deeply interesting subject, are not even to be named when compared with the Hebrew Scriptures.'

world, and we may add to every period of life, from infancy to old age. It affords ample and intelligible instruction to the most ignorant, and a boundless field of research to the most learned.

IV. But what are the claims of the Bible in reference to the *character of its authors*, and the extent to which it is received? Its writers were men of distinguished talents and excellence, often the only writers of the day whose works have come down to us. The authority of no other is more extensively acknowledged or more highly revered. In regard to the extent to which it is received, the Bible is unrivalled, so far as the literature of civilized nations is concerned; and is rapidly extending itself over all nations. It is the avowed standard of truth and duty in all Christian countries.

With the great mass of the Christian world its authority is placed beyond dispute by the belief that they were under the influence of *Divine Inspiration*. It is perpetually appealed to, by the Poet, and the Orator and the Statesman, as well as the Divine, as a rich treasure of truth and of wisdom, of thought and of imagery.

If it be disreputable for a well educated Englishman to be ignorant of the life and works of Shakspeare, and Milton, and Johnson, how much more to the well educated member of a Christian community, not to be familiar with the writings of Moses, and Isaiah, and Paul, and the life of Jesus Christ and his apostles?

V. In regard to *intellectual development*, if to call forth every faculty of the mind upon the most elevated and important subjects, and in the most sublime and beautiful language, be the qualities which render a work suitable for this object, the Bible has no rival.

A mere comparison of the intellectual elevation of those nations to whom the Bible is known, with the ignorance and superstition, and narrowness of mind which characterize all to whom it is unknown, will show that this inference is not founded in theory only. If this difference be ascribed to the influence of science, and if we overlook the fact that the progress of science has been connected with that of the Bible, we shall avoid all possibility of error on this subject, by observing the intellectual influence of the Scriptures on the frozen Esquimaux and the degraded Hottentot, on the natives of our own forests, and the laborers of our own land; whose elevation of thought and language under the instruction of this single book, would often do honor to the well educated scholar. If we place the Bible on the ground of a classic, and attend to its literature and antiquities, and the great principles of interpretation appropriate to it, as we do to those of the classics, we are presented with a boundless field of investigation which from the nature of its subjects, must be far more ennobling and expanding in its influence on the mind, than any other branch of literature.*

* On this point Professor Stuart observes, 'An acquaintance with the helps necessary to a proper study of the original Scriptures, must greatly enlarge the circle of any man's acquaintance with literature, especially with ancient history,

VI. With regard to its *rhetorical character*, and its influence on the imagination and taste, the opinions of Rousseau, Fenelon, Jones, Lowth, and a multitude of other distinguished men, assign it the highest rank. On this subject we have the strongest testimony in the language of Sir William Jones, 'one of the most enlightened civilians and masterly scholars of any age or country, whose profession was that of civil law, who had all the treasures of the East and West at his command, and who opened and examined them all.'

After a familiar acquaintance with the literature of twenty-eight languages, this great man observes ;

'I have carefully and regularly perused the Scriptures, and am of opinion, that this volume independently of its divine origin contains more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, purer morality, more important history, and finer strains, both of poetry, and of eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass, from all other books which were ever composed, in any age or in any idiom.'

Rousseau could not but say : 'The majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with astonishment. Never was the most profound wisdom, expressed with so much energy or simplicity.'

Fenelon observes, in comparing it with those standards of excellence, the classic authors ; 'The Scripture surpasses the most ancient Greek authors vastly, in naked simplicity, loveliness, and grandeur. Homer himself never reached the sublimity of Moses' songs, or equalled Isaiah in describing the majesty of God. Never did any ode, either Greek or Latin, come up to the loftiness of the psalms. In all its diversified compositions, every part bears the peculiar character that becomes it.' 'The history, the particular detail of laws, the descriptions, the vehement and pathetic passages, the miracles and prophecies, the moral discourses — in all these appears a natural and beautiful variety. In short, there is as great a difference between the heathen poets and the prophets, as there is between a false enthusiasm and the true.

VII. In regard to the influence it is fitted to exert *on the moral character and social state of man*, the testimony of history, and of modern experience, unite in proving the Bible, preëminent. We need only compare the nations who receive and read the Bible, with those who reject it, or are shut out from its use, and we shall find in this, the scale of moral development, of social improvement and refinement.

It is acknowledged to contain the purest, and most rational system of religion and code of morals, presented in the most sublime and impressive manner ; and the brightest examples and highest motives to stimulate to moral excellence. Its *influence* has been such as we should expect from its character. To enumerate its actual effects, would be

geography, chronology, and antiquities at large. The history, manners, customs, laws, climate, soil, productions, &c. &c. of all hither Asia, of southern Europe, and northern Africa, (by way of eminence the *ancient world*) are all involved in the exegetical study of the original Scriptures. It is impossible for any man to engage in such a round of study, without enlarging his mind and expanding his views, as well as greatly increasing his knowledge.'

to give a history of all that has been done for 2000 years to ameliorate the sufferings of humanity. It was the influence of the Bible that first established asylums for the poor, and hospitals for the diseased. It was this which released the prisoner of war from the chains of slavery. It was this, that enjoined upon the inhabitants of different countries the common law of *mutual kindness*; which abolished that tremendous statute, enacted by human passions — ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy’ — and made the victor in modern warfare, the guardian and physician of the vanquished. It is the only basis on which our present state of society rests — the only authority which assigns to woman her proper station and influence, and elevates her from the rank of a slave to man, to be his companion, and to exert her softening and refining influence on the social relations. It is the only code which forbids revenge; which extends the law of kindness and forgiveness and beneficence to *all individuals*, and under all circumstances; and thus establishes the only sure foundation for the courtesies of life.

Wherever we have an opportunity of observing its legitimate effects, either on individuals or nations, we find it uniformly favorable to humanity and virtue. Among us, how often has the drunkard become temperate, and the fraudulent, honest, and the cruel, been subdued to kindness. Its influence is daily seen in our prisons, in softening and reforming even the hardened criminal. But it has changed the character of *nations*. It abolished the bloody rites of Diana; and threw down the polluted temples of Venus; and terminated forever the barbarous spectacles of Rome; and destroyed the blood-stained altars of the Druids. Within the recollection of this generation, and under our own observation, it has abolished the sacrifice of parents and the murder of children, among savage tribes, in the wilds of Africa and in the islands of the Pacific. It has banished in more than one nation the horrid feast of human flesh; it has begun to rescue the Hindoo infant from the Ganges, and the Hindoo widow from the funeral pile; and the temples of pollution and blood which still deform that fair portion of the world, are tottering to their fall before the influence of the Bible.

ADAPTATION OF THE BIBLE TO OUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

VIII. But what is the importance and authority of the Bible *in reference to our own peculiar circumstances?*

It is acknowledged by the nation as a book of the highest authority. It is appealed to in our courts of justice, and our oaths of office. The day which it consecrates is acknowledged by a cessation of all public and private business; and gross and open contempt of the truths and worship it inculcates, are punished, to a greater or less extent, by our laws. It is thus admitted by the majority of our nation, as the standard of truth and right, and the object of peculiar reverence. How can we ascertain whether it merits this character and this reverence, without a thorough study of its contents; how can we otherwise act with intelligence as freemen, in deciding whether this preëminence shall be confirmed or abolished?

But in addition to all this, the Bible furnishes the *only permanent basis for a just government*, in asserting the Supreme Authority of a Perfect Ruler, whose laws are formed by Infinite Wisdom, and executed by Infinite Power. It is the only book of universal authority which contains the charter of the subject's rights, — which prescribes the limits of the ruler's power — which dares to give law to the legislator, and denounces penalties against the sovereigns of the earth. It presents a King who is above all kings; and a law which is paramount to every other law. It appoints a tribunal of appeal to which the highest magistrate may be summoned; where power cannot overawe right, nor fraud pervert justice; and where the unjust judgment of the oppressor, will be brought upon his own head. It declares that God 'hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth;' and thus puts to silence the sophisms of philosophy, the false reasoning of national prejudice, and the proud demands of power, which would conquer and oppress men because they belong to another and a feebler nation; and which, like ancient Rome, classes under one common, reproachful epithet of barbarians, all who live upon a different spot of earth, or under another sky.

A glance at the history of nations will show us that this is not mere theory. The records of modern times do not present us with a single country blest with free institutions, on whose permanency and happy influence we can now rely, in which the influence of the Bible is not exerted. In proportion as that has been wanting, the spirit of despotism has maintained its sway, and ignorance, and apathy, and slavery, have been the portion of the people. A single glance at the present condition of the nations of Europe will verify this remark; and it is written in letters of light upon the countries of this continent. Nearly all have asserted and won their independence. Within our borders, the Bible has been the text book for moral and political philosophy, and all has been peace, and security, and prosperity. Beyond the Mexican boundary, the Bible is an unknown, or prohibited book. The struggle for freedom has frequently produced a hundred tyrants in place of one; and property, liberty, and life, were for many years less secure than in most of the despotic governments of Europe. What but the knowledge and influence of the Bible has secured us from the same results? What else can sustain posterity, in resisting the encroachments of future Cæsars, or the outrages of lawless mobs, which human ambition and human passion may yet aim against our rights and liberties, unless we shall prove a happy exception to all the calculations of the politician, and all the examples of history.

PRACTICAL VALUE OF THE BIBLE.

IX. If the claims of the Bible to be studied as a classic, be tested by its *practical value in after life*, the question will be at once decided.

Your Committee have no sympathy with that narrow system of education, which would estimate the value of a study, *solely* by its immediate effects, or by its direct application to the affairs of life, or above all, by the amount of coin it will enable us to produce. Nor do they believe, that studies which have no *immediate* bearing on practice, should be abandoned on this account. Many of those acqui-

sitions of which we never think in after life, have left their influence behind them; and while they are no longer visible, they may be traced, like the food and exercise of our childhood, by the vigor they have produced, and the habits of activity they have formed. It is the object of education to sow the seeds; and results like these are its happiest fruits. But in considering the question whether the study of the Bible shall receive equal attention with others, your Committee do not feel justified in omitting this topic. They see, that while in all that relates to the improvement of the mind and the cultivation of the heart, it yields to no author — to no branch of science or literature — in its influence, it transcends them all, in value, in its application to the concerns of life.

How many of our classic authors are never opened, or rarely referred to, after the close of the collegiate course. How much of the scientific instruction we receive, can never be applied in the course of an ordinary life. Here and there, a beautiful or pertinent passage, or an important principle, occurs at a time and place where they are of great value; but with the *mass of those who pursue a course of collegiate study*, this is the amount of their value, in direct application to the affairs of life. On the other hand, the Bible, while it is equally useful for mental and moral discipline, furnishes the student with a store of truths, and principles of wisdom and morals, which are capable of application *every day and hour, in the life of every individual*. As a code of practical wisdom, to guide us amidst the perplexities and difficulties of life, and guard us against those temptations and trials which so often turn us from the path of safety, as a means of exciting and maintaining that habitual reliance on the Ruler of the universe which gives us a calm but humble independence of all that is human and earthly, even in the midst of danger and difficulty, the Bible surpasses all the lore of Greece and Rome, and stands *alone and unrivalled*, amidst all the claims of science and philosophy.

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE AND OF OTHERS.

In view of these considerations, your Committee cannot escape from the conclusion, that the Bible has higher claims than any other book to profound attention and regular study in our literary institutions, as one of the noblest classics which exists in any language. They cannot suppress the astonishment they feel, that Christian communities do not assign to it that rank among the standards of literature to which its intrinsic value would entitle it, aside from all question of its inspiration, that it is not placed among those authors which are most carefully and most thoroughly studied, that it is not deemed, at least, as essential to a liberal education, as Horace or Homer, as Cicero or Sallust. They are still more surprised, that this exclusion from its legitimate rank, should take place, to a great extent, under the direction of its friends, who maintain the superiority of this book, in the most essential points, to all the works which they make the companions of our youth — who admit that its antiquity is unrivalled, and that its authority is that of God; — who believe that its truths are, like himself, sublime, and holy, and pure, and perfect, and adapted to all the moral exigences of mankind, that it is the only perfect standard of faith, and code of morals, the only permanent charter

of civil and religious liberty, the only light that shines upon the darkness of the tomb, and the only guide to 'that bourne from whence no traveller returns.'

They are happy to find, that in this opinion, gentlemen of various religious views unite. While an accomplished biblical scholar of our country, pronounces the neglect of the Bible in our course of education an astonishing inconsistency, which admits of no justification, one of his distinguished opponents in theological views is equally explicit in declaring it disgraceful and pernicious, and asserts the obvious, but *strangely forgotten truth*, that '*the Bible ought to be understood by a Christian community, more thoroughly than any other book.*'

They find that gentlemen, whose stations in public institutions where the Bible has been studied, has given them experience on this point, are equally explicit on this subject. President Carnahan of Princeton, in a letter to the Committee, observes; 'That such a course of study as shall make our youth acquainted with the contents of the Bible, ought to be pursued in our literary institutions, I have not the smallest doubt.'

President Caldwell of the University of N. C. remarks; 'I have ever viewed the study of the Bible as a proper and most important part of a collegiate course. I do not know how those who *really believe* it to be a revelation from God, can consistently think otherwise.'

President Humphrey closes his communication with saying; 'I can only express my full conviction, that we have hitherto greatly erred, both in theory and practice, in this very important branch of education in a Christian land, and that the time is coming when *the best of all books*, will hold a prominent place in the most approved systems in our Universities and Colleges.'

President Nott of Union College, thus expresses his views on this subject. 'If my opinion will be of any use to you I give it most cheerfully, in favor of making the Bible a text book in the *school, the academy, the college and the university*. To say nothing of its literature, which in my judgment is unrivalled, it contains not only the purest system of morals, but the soundest maxims of *political economy* and the most exact and comprehensive delineations of human nature, to be found on earth. There is more in it to make a man *great* as well as *good*, than there is in any other volume. Man cannot be well educated without the Bible. It ought therefore to hold the chief place in every institution of learning throughout Christendom — and I do not know of a higher service that could be rendered to this republic, than the bringing about this desirable result.'

PERIOD AND MANNER OF STUDYING THE BIBLE.

With regard to the *period* and the *manner* in which the Bible shall be studied, your Committee feel that there is more difficulty in deciding than in regard to the question of its expediency and importance. But they cannot admit that any difficulties which may attend the attainment of an object so essential to the intellectual cultivation and moral improvement of our youth, can render it less a duty to attempt it.

Some are disposed to leave the task exclusively to the parent.

Your Committee believe, that this will only be another mode of deciding that it shall not be performed. We are warned of the danger of excusing parents from the duty of teaching and enforcing religious truth, by assigning the duty to others. But the same argument might be brought with equal force, against measures, which those who make this objection consider essential, we mean against the institution of a Christian ministry, and especially against the pastoral office. Your Committee are persuaded, that to parents and the ministers of religion, especially, belongs the duty of *impressing the principles of morality and religion* on the mind. This however is a task entirely distinct from making them familiar with the contents of the Bible, as the question before us proposes, and cannot be well performed without this previous preparation. But the truth cannot be overlooked or forgotten, that the mass of parents, either from choice or necessity, are too deeply and constantly engaged in their respective occupations, to give such an attention to the subject, as its importance demands; and they appeal to the experience of all around them, whether as parents or as children, for the truth of this remark. If for reasons of this kind, parents think it indispensable to employ another individual to instruct their children in a book so simple as a treatise on arithmetic, or a brief outline of geography, shall they deem it unnecessary for a volume containing forty distinct books, which are to be their standard of faith and code of morals?

We are again told, that 'enough is *already done*, and that *Sunday Schools* will accomplish the work.' These institutions have indeed accomplished an incalculable amount of good; and by far their most important effect is this; they have shown us the influence which the study of the Scriptures exerts, in improving the character, and securing youth from vice, and the state from crime. Immense as the good is, however, we think their influence is far less than it would be, if our youth were trained to a familiarity with all that knowledge which will serve to illustrate the Bible. There is not yet a generation *fully qualified* to become teachers in these schools; and your Committee believe that *there cannot be*, until we have a generation who have received instruction on this subject, proportioned to that which they enjoy on other subjects. We appeal to *the teachers and visitors of Sunday schools*, if there is not an obvious need of more light, such as we propose to have conveyed to the mind of every youth, by a course of biblical study, running parallel to that in which he acquires all other branches of knowledge. But we are met here with this fact as an objection; 'Competent instructors cannot be found.' If this be true, it is subversive of both the preceding objections, and neither parents nor Sunday school teachers can be considered capable of this task.

We are prepared to admit that *the number of instructors* in our common schools qualified to teach the Bible is *small*; and as we have just observed, how can it be otherwise, when even our higher institutions of learning neglect to give the necessary knowledge? But if the very men that are employed to teach and train the youth of a Christian land, who are destined hereafter to be its rulers and guardians and religious guides — if these men are so ignorant of the Bible that they cannot safely be employed in teaching it or hearing it recited, does it not indicate a state of general darkness on this

subject, and an urgent necessity for new efforts in relation to it? Still farther, if we admit the fact, without reservation, it will not at all affect the question of duty and propriety; for if it be established as a plain obligation devolving on those to whose care our youth are committed, to provide for their familiar acquaintance with a book which contains the only pure instruction in moral and religious truth, the question which remains, is one merely of the *time* and *manner* in which it should be done. That it must be *gradually done*, as the opinion of the community and the state of schools shall permit, your Committee believe no one will doubt; and it is for this reason that they consider the necessity more urgent, of *commencing immediately*.

But let the general question be decided, that this is to be an essential part of every course of study, and those who are candidates for the office of teacher will gradually be induced to prepare themselves for this, as for any other branch of instruction. The example of our Sunday schools, where all are volunteers, shows how soon a corps of useful and *comparatively* enlightened teachers may be formed, although they fall far short of the proper standard; for the very obvious reason that they themselves have no adequate and appropriate means of instruction within their reach. The same reply must be made to the objection, that 'there are no suitable books upon the literature of the Bible.' The demand, as in all other cases, will produce the supply. They are already rapidly increasing. The polluted mythology of Greece and Rome, has its appropriate works in our own language from the ablest pens, to illustrate the character and attributes of its host of deities.

‘ Gods, partial, changeful, passionate, unjust,
Whose attributes were rage, revenge, and lust.’

Our youth must pore over these, for years of close and enfeebling study. Our teachers must spend days and nights to prepare themselves for teaching them. The press is burdened with books of every form and size, to illustrate the Classics, and History, and Geography, and the science of numbers; but how few are there designed to facilitate the study of the Bible! It is because they are not called for. The same spirit of enterprise which furnishes one class, will supply the other as soon as there is a demand.

The same objection has been made, and if it be valid, must necessarily be made, against the introduction of every new branch of instruction; and it would compel us to arrest the progress of improvement. How few years have elapsed since mental Arithmetic, and Geography were deemed unsuitable to a common school; and Natural History would have been regarded as utterly inadmissible. It would have been triumphantly replied to their advocates; ‘however useful they may be, they *cannot* be taught; and that cannot be a duty which is impracticable.’ Yet the two first branches of instruction are now almost universal; and the last is by no means uncommon. We must not err by regarding teachers as incapable of improvement, and of self-improvement also.

But if after all, teachers be found so ignorant and so indifferent to the subject, that they cannot or will not qualify themselves for as-

sisting their pupils to comprehend a book, which should be the guide and manual of every instructor, we ask, whether it will not be a happy effect of this plan, should it lead to the employment of others? Should the adoption of such a course of study prove the means of elevating the standard of character among our common school instructors — should it lead those to read and study the Scriptures, who now neglect them — this alone would be a result of immense value. It would improve the character, elevate the views, and soften and refine the feeling of the teacher, and present an example worthy of imitation to the pupil and would thus do more to promote the good order of our schools, than any code of laws.

SUPPOSED DANGERS OF THE STUDY.

But we are sometimes told that the Bible will fall into unhallowed hands. It will be desecrated by the inattention and irreverence of some; it will be perverted by the false opinions of others. If this be true, the result will be satisfactory to those who regard it as a false and unworthy system of superstition. This objection, like the preceding, can only be adduced by the *friends of the Bible*, and the answer must of course be founded on *their own principles*. The case fairly stated according to *their principles*, seems to be this: 'There is a book which is generally admitted to contain the purest code of morals, the most elevated system of religious truth, which has ever appeared, which is made an object of reverence by our governments, which is regarded by the mass of the community as the revelation which God has sent, to direct us in the path of duty and happiness. The question before us is; shall this be taught to our youth, as regularly and as faithfully as other subjects of study?' The objection brought is, that our youth are often entrusted to the care of men who are so ignorant or so indifferent or so opposed to this only standard of truth, that it is not safe to put it into their hands! Might not the same objection have been urged against committing Bible instruction to the ministers of the Christian Church, when after a long night of ignorance, its darkness and desolation were discovered? Is not the reply here, as it was there; 'Require them to teach the Bible, and you will soon make them better men, or procure others in their place.'

The deeper the shade in which the ignorance and incompetency of our instructors to teach the records of Divine Wisdom aright is portrayed, the more urgent the necessity for introducing it among their pupils, to compensate in some measure for this deficiency; or by making this deficiency obvious to the community, to induce the teacher to resign his station, or his employers to seek some one to occupy his place. Your Committee beg leave to ask, in what other mode we can hope to effect either of these objects? Shall we wait upon the banks of the stream, for its waters to flow by? Or shall we adopt the practice of some ancient surgeons, and instead of probing the wound, carefully preserve the instrument with which it was inflicted? But as friends of the Bible, your Committee are not prepared to allow that it is dependent on human countenance, or human contempt, for its authority and influence on the minds of those who read it; or that it is unsafe to send it into a school, lest it should become the object of ridicule; or that it is necessary to reform men,

before placing it in their hands. So far from this, they believe it to be *the most efficient messenger of good*; the best antidote for moral poison. They trust that few, very few teachers will be found, who will treat the Bible with contempt; but were they directed to devise some means of supplying the defects, or counteracting the scoffs of such teachers as have been described, or of winning over a school or community where the Bible was disbelieved and despised, they believe that no means would be more likely to be effectual, *as a first step*, than to send the Bible as a *silent monitor*, and direct its daily perusal, by the teacher and his pupils.

A single proposition will bring this to the test. Could the friends of the Scriptures be now assured that the empire of Japan, in which Christianity is regarded with contempt and abhorrence, in which its ministers have been tortured, and its profession is made a capital crime, — that this empire of scoffers and haters of the Bible, was open to the reception of a translation of the Scriptures, even on condition that they should be read and commented upon by their own priests, would there be a moment's hesitation in grasping at the opportunity, and thanking God for the privilege of sending them? Would the sincere friends of the Bible doubt, that *good*, nay, that *incalculable good* would ultimately result? Would they not feel confident that the truth would ultimately achieve its triumphs in many a mind, and establish its empire over many a heart? If then there be, in any corner of our land, a district or a school, as hostile to the Bible and its ministers as Japan, who can propose a means more likely to be successful in changing their views, than to send this despised book, to bear witness for itself, to open the eyes of ignorance, and shut the mouth of opposition? Can we believe that the truth, which, in every land to which it has gained access, has rolled forward like a mighty stream, and extinguished the fires of superstition, and swept away the temples of idolatry, with all the fables of paganism, and the visions of false philosophy, will be arrested by the scoffs or opposition of a teacher or professor? No: let us but open the channel, and it will still flow on. The opposers of the Bible will not wait for its introduction as a classic, to attack it with argument and ridicule. Let its friends provide the only effectual means of maintaining its influence, by sending the Bible itself, as an answer; and let it be sent most speedily to those places, where no influence is exerted in its favor, if it will only be received and read.

But we are told that this familiarity with the Holy Scriptures, will impair the reverence we should feel towards them — that to make them the companions of childhood and youth, will make them wearisome or disgusting in after life.

Your Committee are aware that this objection is often presented, and strongly felt, by those who are most deeply interested in the Scriptures, and most anxious to promote their influence. But they would respectfully ask, whether the Bible is *in fact most revered*, by those who are *least familiar* with it? Is it among those who have been brought up in ignorance of the sacred volume, or among those who have been trained in families, where it was daily read and regularly taught, that we find the greatest number of its friends and advocates?

Is any apprehension entertained, that the classics will become less interesting by being more thoroughly studied, or does this result really take place? In this view, does not the objection before us almost involve a libel upon the Scriptures? Do we rely on the intrinsic merits and beauties of the classics, to secure this point, and shall we hesitate to place the same reliance upon the influence of the Scriptures? Are they to be ranked among those productions, which, like the rough hewn statues, or the imperfect characters of men, require to be placed at a distance in order to conceal their defects? Or must we treat them like the Egyptian relics of divine animals, and envelope them in the wrappings of obscurity, or entomb them in the stately pyramids of theological learning, in order to screen them from the gaze of the vulgar, and secure to them the veneration which a close inspection would destroy?

Your Committee cannot admit, for a moment, the force of an argument, which seems to them more appropriate to the disbelievers of the Bible, or to an assembly of that dark age, when ignorance was regarded as the mother of devotion, than to a Convention of the nineteenth century, whose public acts acknowledge this book as a revelation from God. In this, as in all other works of its great Author, every new observation will disclose new beauties, and the beauties which become most familiar, will afford the richest subjects for admiration and recollection.

SUPPORT OF SECTARIAN INFLUENCE.

But the objection most strenuously urged against the study of the Bible is, that it would have a *sectarian character and influence*.

So far as our literary institutions are avowedly sectarian (and we have many of this kind,) this objection of course will not apply. Nor will it lie against the introduction of the study of the Bible, into any institution, where public worship is maintained; for it is obvious, that there is far less room for sectarian influence in a lecture on the Bible, than in a prayer, or in a sermon. Provision may be made in such cases, as it is in regard to public worship, that any individual who desires it, may be excused at the request of his parents or guardians, from this study. Nay, if it be deemed necessary, it may be entirely voluntary. Your Committee believe that nothing but a suitable devotion to the subject is necessary, to make it the *most interesting and attractive branch of study* even in our colleges.

But they believe that it may be pursued without exciting any apprehension of sectarian influence. They believe that the study of Sacred Literature and Antiquities, may be as free from party influence, as that of Classic Literature; and even that the student may be left, in this part of his course, as free to judge of Christianity as of Paganism, if this be desired. They find practical evidence of this. President Carnahan, of Princeton College, where this study has been pursued for eighteen years, observes; 'Of those who have entered this institution, we can say with confidence, that they have attended Bible recitations, as punctually, and have prepared the lesson as carefully, as any which were purely literary or scientific. We have heard no complaints from the youth, or their parents, that a sectarian influence was exercised by means of the Bible recitations.'

We have had, and still have, students of various sects, Episcopalians, Baptists, Methodists, Quakers, Dutch Reformed, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and even Roman Catholics; and in no case, have we heard of any conscientious scruples upon this subject.'

Your Committee have known similar results in schools, where the Bible was taught to an equal variety of sects.

In regard to other institutions, your Committee believe that no measure will be more effectual in *repressing the sectarian spirit*, and cherishing kindness, and forbearance, and charity, among those who differ in sentiment on the important subject of religion.

They are persuaded that the general testimony of observing men, will establish the fact, that the most violent sectarians are those who are more conversant with human systems of theology, than with the Scriptures; and that its humble, constant readers are more deeply imbued with the expansive spirit of benevolence, than many who read more of other books. They believe with a recent writer on this point; 'Reciprocal love and forbearance, liberal sentiments, and mutual respect and esteem would be interwoven with all the studies of youth, and they would learn insensibly, but indelibly, experimentally, though not theoretically, that Christianity is above all sects, and the Bible above all creeds and confessions; that religion is pure and elevated, simple, beautiful and affecting, and common to all.'

The differences of opinion among mankind, and above all, the asperity which they often produce, arise to a great extent from a want of familiarity with the subject in debate; and if increased knowledge does not produce increased harmony of sentiment, there is a never failing advance in the spirit of charity towards others, when a thorough study of the subject has disclosed to us the difficulties and perplexities which attend it.

That absolute unity of sentiment is to be anticipated from any course, your Committee do not imagine; but they believe that worse than division, an unkind disposition towards those who differ from us in opinion, would be materially diminished; that even the believer and the disbeliever in the Scriptures would regard each other with more forbearance and respect; and that their controversies would be carried on, in a manner better calculated to promote the cause of truth, wherever it may be found.

As believers in the Scriptures, your Committee are persuaded, that most of that disbelief, which is founded on grounds purely rational and philosophical, would vanish before a thorough examination of them; and that even prejudice would be shaken, if not overthrown, in a great many instances, by that view of the purity, and excellence, and sublimity, and beauty of the Scriptures, which would be presented in a thorough examination of them, with all the light to be derived from ancient literature and manners.

The friends of the Scriptures do not fear the result of any examination, however profound; of any scrutiny, however severe. In adopting a candid and enlightened course of biblical study, can they not confidently appeal to every *candid disbeliever*, whether he also is not willing that every youth in our land should be enabled to examine them in this manner, by being thoroughly acquainted with their con-

tents, with the geography and history of the country to which they relate, with the manners and customs of the people among whom they were written, and with the character of the authors? At present, neither sufficient time nor adequate assistance is afforded to our youth for this purpose. While every facility is provided to make them familiar with the fables of Greece and Rome, and with the principles of every science, it is impossible for them to procure an adequate knowledge of the Bible and its literature, without resorting to a theological institution, at an expense of time and money, which make it impossible to most of those, who desire a liberal education.

In corroboration of their views, the Committee would quote the following extract from the communication of President Carnahan.

'We have long entertained the opinion, that ignorance of the contents of the Bible, is the foundation of a great part of the objections urged against it. Our experience, as far as it goes, confirms the opinion, that a knowledge of the Bible has a tendency to remove scepticism. We do not assert that no young man, during the eighteen years that the Sacred Scriptures have been studied in this institution, has finished his academical course, without being convinced of the divine origin of the Bible. But we can safely say, that less infidelity has existed than in any other period of equal duration, when the sacred Scriptures were not studied. We also know many young men, who came here with strong prejudices against the Bible, that left us, to say the least, with a high veneration for this Holy Book.'

We would again appeal to the disbeliever, and ask — In what other way can posterity be enabled to decide the momentous question of the truth of the Bible? If it is false, how tremendous is the influence of its system of errors! It makes no compromise with any other system of religion. In some respects, at least, its doctrines are so peculiar, and its claims so exclusive, that if it be true, every other system of religion, *considered as a complete system*, is false.

With such an influence and with such pretensions, how important for the welfare of mankind, that the Bible, if false, should be universally known to be so. Let it then form a part of the course of instruction of the higher order of minds, and let it thus be brought, as soon as possible, to the severest and most thorough scrutiny. Let it thus pass the ordeal of an examination by those, who understand the whole subject, and if its claims are unfounded, such a course will the sooner rescue mankind from the thralldom of superstition, in which so many of them are now held. On the other hand, 'if a more familiar acquaintance with the Bible, than is generally possessed by literary and professional men, should have a tendency to remove prejudice, and create a conviction of its divine origin, no honest man ought to regret the consequence.'

EXCLUSION OF THE BIBLE, SECTARIAN.

But your Committee maintain, *that the course of exclusion which is now adopted, is in the highest degree sectarian*. It is directly calculated to promote the views of *disbelievers* who deny entirely the truth of the Scriptures; and who form an increasing and active *sect* among us. There is no scruple in making the mythology of Greece and

Rome the subject of constant study for years in succession. The regulations of our public institutions, the rules of the learned professions, and in many instances the laws of the country, require a thorough familiarity with these fables, and with all their attendant history, while they demand no acquaintance with the records of Christianity. *Is not this virtually to banish the Bible from our institutions*, to declare it unnecessary as a qualification of the liberally educated man, of the guardians of our rights, and the instructors of our youth; as a study important only to clergymen and appropriate only to the theological school? Is it not to say that the classics and mathematics, that Xenophon, Homer, and Virgil, that Locke, and Paley, are more deserving of attention, more fitted to enlarge and elevate the mind, to cultivate the taste, and form the able and useful man, than Moses and David, than Isaiah, and Daniel, and Christ, and his Apostles—that the heathen mythology should be studied more carefully than Christianity? And when the period of education is so filled up, that no time is left for the deep and thorough study of the Bible, with the full energies of the mind, what is this, but to *execute the sentence of banishment* already pronounced? The student is led to the streams of Helicon and Parnassus, and taught to drink deep at the Pierian spring: but those to whom he looks as the guides and guardians of his youth, as the chosen judges in science and literature, do little more than point out to him the road to the fountains of Divine Wisdom. At the same time, they require him to devote his best daily hours to other subjects, and they demand a degree of proficiency in these, which can be attained only by unremitted and undivided attention, as the standard of merit, as the condition of obtaining the honors of the institution, and as the only ground on which they can promise success in future life.

CONCLUSION, AND METHODS OF STUDY.

As the result of all their inquiries, your Committee are fully satisfied that *the Bible ought to be ranked among the classics of a Christian community*. They believe that *all our youth ought to be made familiar with its contents as a branch of common education; and that in addition to this, an acquaintance with its literature and antiquities should form a part of every course of liberal education*; not to the exclusion of the Grecian and Roman classics, or modern history and science, but as a *necessary branch of knowledge* to every man who wishes to be familiar with the history of his race, and the civil and religious institutions of his country.

In regard to the *method* in which a course of biblical instruction should be conducted, your Committee would not exceed the limits assigned them, and weary the patience of the Convention, by entering into any details, even if they felt competent to the task. They believe, at the same time, that the method must often vary, with the local and pecuniary circumstances of an institution. They would however venture to express their conviction still farther, that the historical portions of the Bible should be made familiar to children in our schools, as early as their minds are capable of understanding its

simple narratives ; and that, whenever it is practicable, it should be read and recited in our common schools, either in portions assigned by the teacher, or in selections prepared for this purpose, by all the pupils who are able to read it with propriety. They are of opinion that its geography, manners, and customs, should be taught in connection with it, as soon as the mind is prepared for this study ; and that the students of our higher institutions, should at least be made familiar with all parts of the sacred volume, and with such portions of its literature, and the elementary principles of interpretation, as will enable them to read commentaries with satisfaction, and to appreciate the arguments which are so constantly drawn from it, in regard to the great questions of truth and duty.

To such a course, they see not how even the disbeliever in the inspiration of the Bible can object. For how can he be willing that his children should be ignorant of this object of universal reverence, this oracle of 200 millions of our race ; or desire that they should reject it without examination. Should sectarian jealousy be found to interfere with this course, the same plan may be adopted as in the mixed schools and colleges of the continent of Europe. There, this branch of instruction is often assigned to several clergymen, or other individuals of the same sect with the pupils. Should this be regarded as an *evil*, the Committee would ask, whether it is not *an evil far less than that neglect of this subject*, which is now so general, or that forcible and unnatural separation of religious and ordinary knowledge, which characterizes our systems of education.

In those institutions which are designed to furnish a complete circle of science, your Committee believe that an important step remains to be taken. There is no hesitation concerning the necessity of founding and endowing professorships for the languages and literature of Greece and Rome, for Chemistry, and Philosophy, and Botany, and Mineralogy, for the Mathematics and Metaphysics, for the French and Spanish and German languages, and some are even provided with instructors in Gymnastics and Drawing. Yet in all our *literary institutions*, not an individual, they believe, is to be found, *entirely* employed in teaching Sacred Literature and the Sacred Classics. They cannot think, that if this subject is brought before the community, with the sanction and influence of this Convention, that *public opinion* will long permit this glaring inconsistency in our course of education ; or that *private liberality*, which supplies so freely the means of instruction in heathen and foreign literature and abstruse science, will continue to neglect Christian learning, and suffer our youth to remain destitute of the best means for understanding and vindicating the religion of their country and their fathers.

Your Committee are enabled to present the following facts in regard to the methods of biblical instruction adopted in some of our Colleges.

In *Princeton College*, New Jersey, a recitation on a portion of the English translation previously appointed, occupies the place of a discourse in an afternoon service on Sunday. President Carnahan states, that 'four or five chapters alternately in the Old and New Testaments are assigned as the subject of examination, and all the students are required to be prepared to repeat the words of the sacred

writer, or to give the import of the passage in their own language, at option ; and to answer such questions as obviously arise from the portion under review, followed by remarks and explanations by the instructor.'

In *Union College*, we are informed by President Nott, that 'the Bible has been only partially introduced, by himself, as a book of reference during his lectures to the Senior Class, and by the Professors, as a text book, in the hands of voluntary Bible classes.' 'It has been a study here, both in the original languages, and in the translation ; so far as this could be done without coercion ; it being one of the voluntary studies.'

Your Committee also learn from President Caldwell of the University of North Carolina, that 'The Bible has been habitually used as a text book in recitations on the Sabbath in that college. Other books on evidences have also been studied.'

By a communication from President Humphrey of Amherst College, your Committee find, that the Bible has been made for several years the subject of instruction in voluntary classes in that institution. It was introduced as a text book in 1828, and has constituted a part of the regular course of instruction ever since. One half day in each week is devoted to these exercises. The historical part of the course is assigned to the Freshman Year. It comprises an account of the Scriptures themselves, the manner of their preservation, the languages into which they are translated, the different translations in our own language, and other interesting details ; and a thorough study of the history they contain, beginning with the Old Testament. In passing from the Old Testament to the New, an account of the intervening period is given from secular history. The historical books of the New Testament being deemed even more important than that of the Old, occupy a larger portion of their time, and finish this part of the course.

To the Sophomore Year are assigned the Prophecies and the Poetry of the Old Testament, embracing an account of the Prophets, their periods of writing, their countries, their respective prophecies, &c ; the characteristics of Hebrew Poetry, the books in which it is found, the occasions on which it was written, and its principal authors, followed by a comparison of the poetry of the Hebrews, with that of other nations.

Your Committee find, that this purely biblical course of instruction is given, in addition to a brief course of lectures on the evidences of Christianity, and a series of recitations on the great truths and precepts found in the Bible, which do not fall within the present question.

In addition to these plans, Professor Potter, of Union College, has suggested to the Committee, that without making the Bible a distinct and formal subject of instruction, its *style*, and *imagery*, and *poetry*, might be introduced in connection with a course of *rhetoric* ; and its *antiquities*, in connection with those of *Greece and Rome* ; and that one of the periods assigned for public worship should be occupied with other biblical exercises.

In regard to the last suggestion, your Committee would remark, that if no other plan be practicable, in particular institutions, they see not what objection can exist to the devotion of the public services on

Sunday to biblical investigation and recitation, until an advance in public opinion and public interest on the subject, shall enable Colleges and Schools (as they believe it will) to assign a distinct place and an entire professor, to this important branch of knowledge.

It is proper to add that a course of biblical studies is to be pursued in the Colleges at Waterville, Maine, and Hudson, Ohio ; and that a course of expository lectures on the Bible has been commenced at Yale College, entirely voluntary, however, on the part of the Professor and the pupils.

STUDY OF THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES.

It is objected by some that the study of the translation can never give our youth an adequate knowledge of the Bible. If this be true, it presents a case still stronger than your Committee have offered. Let us suppose that the Constitution of the United States were written in a foreign tongue, and that this had been the language of Washington and Franklin, and the fathers of our country, and let it be declared by men competent to judge, that so imperfect was the view given of it in our translation that neither our constitution nor the opinions and laws of the founders of our institutions, could be fully understood, or accurately interpreted without a knowledge of the original. Suppose, to make the case parallel, that this constitution was *unchangeable*; that these laws and opinions were declared to be *the highest authority* on every question relating to our duty and our rights as citizens, — what American, who claimed to be well educated, would consent to remain in ignorance of it? Who that designed to have a share in the blessings and privileges of our constitution, would not esteem this an acquisition far more valuable, than the history or the opinions of any individual, or any nation, of ancient or of modern times? Is not the argument equally strong in regard to the Bible? Whether it be admitted or denied by *individuals*, it is believed by the *majority of the nation* to possess an authority which is binding and unchangeable; which is paramount to all human laws, to which (as they believe) all human governors are amenable, and by which they are bound to regulate their conduct towards all others.

Who then can *safely* be ignorant of a book which decides and portrays the character and views of the community on whom his liberty and property and life are dependent? Who would not encounter and surmount great difficulties, to obtain this knowledge, even if the Bible be considered as a mere work of man? And *the lower its origin* is supposed to be, — the greater we believe the probability of its containing gross or dangerous errors, — *the more important* that we should be enabled to understand and appreciate them, that we may be qualified to counteract their influence.

But your Committee cannot do justice to this part of the subject without referring to the claims of the *Hebrew language* to the attention of the literary man, and stating the opinions of those who are qualified to decide upon them.

A writer in the Christian Examiner, who opposes the introduction of the Bible as a classical study, for reasons, of which

the most important have been considered by your Committee, thus speaks of the Hebrew language.

'This ancient and peculiar tongue, apart from its claims upon our attention as the vehicle employed by the sacred penmen to communicate to the world the messages of inspiration, presents a curious object of study to the lover of philological pursuits. It is the oldest language, probably, of which we have any authentic records. It bears every internal mark of being strictly an original, a primitive language. Its vocabulary is limited; but at the same time, it seems wonderfully adapted to the purposes of simple narration, lyric poetry, and the sublimest flights of oriental and inspired imagination. The strength and living glow of its expressions have been the admiration of scholars, and have set at defiance, in the intensely animated pictures they present, the periphrastic coldness of modern times.'

Considering merely their literary character, Professor Stuart asks with great force, 'why the Hebrew Scriptures are not as well worthy of a place in a plan of liberal education, as the writings of Homer and Virgil, of Xenophon and Livy? He goes on to observe, 'The Germans, (those great masters of the science of liberal education) have judged that they are. Yes, even they who have renounced the Bible as a divine book, have so judged. They have made the study of the Hebrew Scriptures a part of their plan of discipline, in all their universities; they have done this in their best and most important *Gymnasia*.' And all this from the mere feeling of *consistency*, and *classic taste*. The same enthusiasm which leads them to spend twenty years on the antiquities of Greece and Rome, leads many of them to spend the like time on those of the land of Israel. Here is consistency, at least, if nothing more. But are our plans of education equally consistent?

With no less energy and interest, Professor Turner, of New York, inquires; 'Why are not these works more valued, and their contents more studied and better understood? How is it that in literary communities, their legitimate claims, as works of talent, are so generally overlooked? And what is more serious still, how is it that in Christian communities their rightful demands are neglected? How is it, I would ask, in the language of one whose name as associated with sacred literature, is well known, (Prof. Stuart,) How is it that "believing the Hebrew Scriptures to contain a revelation from Heaven, they are not to be counted worthy of study? Shall years of toil and expense be occupied in the study of Greek and Roman history and mythology; shall no efforts be deemed too great to accomplish this purpose; and yet not one feeble attempt be made to lead the youthful mind to the original source of all true history, and of the only true theology?" Shall we insist upon our children becoming "familiarily acquainted with all the actions" of the so called deities "of Greece and Rome, actions shameful to be recorded, beyond measure shocking to be perpetrated;" and yet never instruct them in those original oracles, "which unfold the glorious and perfect character of Him in whose sight the heavens are not clean?" With the same animated writer, I would express my own sentiments in the phraseology of a Hebrew, and declare that "as a sword in my bones," I feel the bitter reproach

of such a question. And I beg leave to add the conviction of my own mind, that it is a question which no consistent believer in divine revelation, who reflects with a suitable degree of seriousness on the subject, can answer to his own satisfaction.'

It is often objected that *the study of the original Scriptures is professional; that it must be left to the clergy.* In reply to this, Professor Stuart asks with conclusiveness, are not Navigation, and Surveying, and Chemistry, and Mineralogy, far more professional than that study which introduces us to subjects of the deepest interest to every immortal being? Shall the people of this land, professedly and proverbially, of free inquiry, leave themselves dependent on the clergy, for all their knowledge of those books which profess to bring life and immortality to light? On this point, he thus expresses his own feelings. 'Much as I respect and love my brethren in the ministry, I do not wish the keys of the kingdom of heaven to be entrusted solely to their hands. This has once been tried, and the shadow of death spread over the nations. The sun of righteousness set, and polar midnight succeeded. No; I would fain have ten thousand times ten thousand laymen in our land who are studying the divine word with all their might, and in the best manner, and who keep a watchful eye on all the authorized interpreters of the same.'

On the whole, your Committee cannot but appeal to the Convention, as literary men, and as members of a Christian community, whether, while they are devising means to elevate and improve our course of classical and scientific studies, they *can venture* to refuse the Bible a place among those honored works, which are to occupy the days and nights of our youth, and thus remand it to the nursery and the Sunday school, as unworthy of a place in the temple of literature? Whether they are not *called upon*, in view of the high responsibility they have assumed, to adopt some measures to recommend and promote the thorough study of the Bible in every place of education? They would respectfully propose that the Convention express a *distinct opinion* on this subject, and that a Committee, embracing gentlemen, of experience, in our literary institutions, be appointed to prepare and report a plan for a course of biblical instruction, commencing with our common schools, and extending through the academical and collegiate course, which shall embrace the literature and antiquities of the Scriptures.

In behalf of the Committee,

WM. C. WOODBRIDGE, *Chairman.*



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